

**LEGISLATIVE SERVICES AGENCY**  
**OFFICE OF FISCAL AND MANAGEMENT ANALYSIS**  
301 State House  
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**FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

**LS 6541**

**BILL NUMBER:** HB 1065

**DATE PREPARED:** Dec 6, 2001

**BILL AMENDED:**

**SUBJECT:** Annual PERF Cost of Living Adjustment.

**FISCAL ANALYST:** James Sperlik

**PHONE NUMBER:** 232-9866

**FUNDS AFFECTED:** X GENERAL  
X DEDICATED  
FEDERAL

**IMPACT:** State & Local

**Summary of Legislation:** This bill establishes an annual cost of living adjustment (COLA) for members of the Public Employees' Retirement Fund (PERF) (or their survivors or beneficiaries) subject to: (1) the inclusion of the increase in PERF's annual actuarial valuation; and (2) the Governor's approval.

**Effective Date:** July 1, 2002.

**Explanation of State Expenditures:** *Fiscal Impact:* This bill providing an annual 2% COLA is estimated to increase the payout to state retirees by \$1.84 M in CY 2003 and \$3.72 M in CY 2004. The portion of these costs funded by the state General Fund is estimated to be \$1.012 M for the first year's payout and \$2.046 M in the second. The portion paid by dedicated funds is estimated to be \$0.828 M for the first year's payout and \$1.674 M in the second. However, this will not increase contribution rates above those already calculated since the current contribution rates have already assumed a 2% increase.

*Background:* The current actuarial assumption utilized in the actuarial valuations already includes an assumed 2% annual COLA based on prior experience and anticipated future experience. Since the proposed COLA cannot exceed 2%, there would be no increase in contribution rates required.

For state employees, PERF is funded by a level percent of payroll contributed by the employing agencies. The funds affected are the General Fund (at about 55%) and various dedicated funds (at about 45%). The percentages listed represent the approximate amount each fund contributes for personal services in the state budget. The payout for benefits would increase with this proposal. For example, for FY 2000, the most recent year for which complete data are available, benefits for retirees and disabled participants for both the state and municipalities amounted to approximately \$230 M. This proposal would increase that amount by approximately \$4.6 M in the first year of the increase (and about \$9.3 M in the second year). The amount attributable to the state is estimated at 40%, or approximately \$1.84 M in the first year. Of this amount, approximately \$1.012 M would be paid by the State General Fund, and approximately \$0.828 M would be paid by various dedicated funds. Second year estimates would be based on an additional 2% COLA provided

in CY 2004. It should be noted that this will not increase the contribution rate for the employing agencies over what is currently paid.

### **Explanation of State Revenues:**

**Explanation of Local Expenditures:** *Fiscal Impact:* This bill providing an annual 2% COLA is estimated to increase the payout to non-state PERF retirees by \$2.76 M in the CY 2003 and \$5.58 M in CY 2004. This will be paid by local governmental units with employees in PERF. However, this will not increase contribution rates above those already calculated since the current contribution rates have already assumed a 2% increase.

*Background:* The current actuarial assumption utilized in the actuarial valuations already includes an assumed 2% annual COLA based on prior experience and anticipated future experience. Since the proposed COLA cannot exceed 2%, there would be no increase in contribution rates required. For local employees, PERF is funded by a level percent of payroll contributed by the employing agencies. The payout for benefits would increase with this proposal. For example, for FY 2000, the most recent year for which complete data are available, benefits for retirees and disabled participants for both state and municipalities amounted to approximately \$230 M. This proposal would increase that amount by approximately \$4.6 M in the first year (and about \$9.3 M in the second year). The amount attributable to municipalities is estimated at 60%, or approximately \$2.76 M. Second year estimates would be based on an additional 2% COLA provided in CY 2004. It should also be noted that this will not increase the contribution rate for the employing agencies.

*Background Information on COLAs:* COLAs are currently (and have been for many years) awarded annually on an ad-hoc basis. The legislature during each session considers and frequently adopts a “COLA bill” for PERF benefit recipients. This was occurring with such frequency that, back in the late 1980's, an experience study was prepared to determine an actuarial assumption to anticipate current and future COLAs. The experience study revealed that over the preceding ten years there was an average COLA of 2% per year. As a result, an annual 2% COLA actuarial assumption was adopted. What this meant was that the actuarial valuations from that time on, anticipated an annual ad-hoc COLA of 2% and built this anticipation into the employer contribution rate. Therefore, the employer contribution rate was established in such a fashion as to pre-fund annual 2% ad-hoc COLAs. This proposal changes the procedure from an ad-hoc to a permanent basis.

### **Explanation of Local Revenues:**

**State Agencies Affected:** PERF.

**Local Agencies Affected:** Those units with members in PERF.

**Information Sources:** Doug Todd of McCready & Keane, Inc., actuaries for PERF, 576-1508.

### **DEFINITIONS:**

**Cost of Living Adjustment:** An across-the-board increase (or decrease) in wages or pension benefits according to the rise (or fall) in the cost of living as measured by some index, often the Consumer Price Index (CPI).

**Ad Hoc Postretirement Adjustment:** (COLA) An adjustment that establishes a schedule of nonrecurring

increases in retirement allowances (COLA).

Actuarial Assumption: Factors used by the actuary in forecasting uncertain future events affecting pension cost. They involve such things as interest and investment earnings, inflation, unemployment, mortality rates, and retirement patterns.

Actuarial Valuation: An examination of a pension plan to determine whether contributions are being accumulated at a rate sufficient to provide the funds out of which the promised pensions can be paid when due. The valuation shows the actuarial liabilities of the plan and the applicable assets. The determination, as of a valuation date, of the normal cost, actuarial accrued liability, actuarial value of assets, and related actuarial present values for a pension plan.

Contribution Rate: As to an employee, a factor, such as a percentage of compensation, used in determining the amounts of payments to be made by the employee under a contributory pension plan. As to the employer, a factor, calculated in an actuarial valuation, to be used in determining the employer's annual normal cost contributions under a pension plan. An employer's contribution rate may be either a percentage to be applied to the total compensation paid to cover employees for a particular year, or an amount in dollars to be applied to the total number of covered employees at a particular date.